CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY)
OPENING STATEMENT ON COMPUTING HEARING
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I want to welcome everyone here this morning to this extraordinarily important hearing. We're here to examine the state of federal computer science funding. That may sound like an arcane and even dreary subject, but what's at stake is nothing less than our nation's future prosperity and security.

That's not an exaggeration. Information technology advances are responsible for our productivity and economic health, and information technology undergirds and facilitates just about every personal and commercial activity we undertake these days. Information technology provides not just a web, it is the warp and woof of our society.

And it is too easy to take something that has become so basic and so omnipresent for granted. But we didn't get to where we are today by accident and indirection. We are the world leader in information technology, in part, because of strategic investments the federal government began making decades ago. And we will only remain the world leader if we continue to make the right investments.

In theory at least, I think there's a broad consensus about what the federal government needs to be doing. We need to continue to follow our recipe for success. That means we need a balanced portfolio that includes significant funding for long-term, fundamental computer science research, much of it at universities – the kind of research that has brought us the Internet and the World Wide Web.

And as this Committee has said repeatedly, some of that long-term research needs to be focused on cybersecurity because we're not going to protect our information technology in today's world through a hodge-podge of patches and existing know-how.

I don't think anyone disagrees with those statements. The question is whether current federal funding is in line with the theoretical consensus. And despite some rather defensive testimony we'll hear today, one has to conclude that the answer is "no."

Current federal funding is not properly balanced. It does not adequately continue our historic commitment to longer-range, more basic research in computer science, and it does not focus sufficiently on cybersecurity.

We cannot have a situation where university researchers can point to sharp declines in DARPA funding, reviews of research results that reflect telescoped time horizons, and increased classification. We cannot have a situation where proposal approval rates at the National Science Foundation (NSF) drop by half in just a few years. We cannot have a situation where a Presidential advisory council declares that our information technology infrastructure is "highly vulnerable" and that there is "relatively little support for fundamental research to address the larger security vulnerabilities." We cannot have a situation where a Pentagon advisory board similarly expresses deep concern over the lack of long-term computing research.

This is not a matter of questioning the policy or budget of any single agency. This is a matter of having a critical, high-profile national need that is not being addressed by an overall, coordinated federal policy or by overall federal spending.

I know we are operating in a time of major fiscal constraints. I know we have a war on. But I think Dr. Wulf makes an important point in his testimony when he notes that if we had similarly narrowed our focus during the Vietnam War, we probably wouldn't have the Internet or the other computing technology we take for granted today.

So I hope we can have a robust and open discussion today about what specifically we can all do to ensure that we have a more balanced, better focused computer science portfolio that will, among other things, enhance funding of cybersecurity research. The status quo is simply unacceptable.

This Committee has long been a leader in pushing the federal government to move ahead in computer science, whether that meant helping to create NSF's supercomputer centers or passing the Cybersecurity Research and Development Act. I know that all our witnesses today care about these issues just as much as we do – and indeed spend far more of their time working on them.

Together, we need to come up with a plan to get us back on a path that has brought us the information technology on which we have become utterly reliant.

Mr. Gordon.